



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
February 21st, 2012**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged, and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Rich Fales, Commissioner, made a motion to accept the January Meeting Summary Minutes as written. Mike Subin, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the January Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Update on Veterans Collaborative ~ Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner

The Veterans Collaborative survey is still active. They have received approximately 160 responses. Their goal is to get 500 responses. The majority of the survey participants are from the Vietnam era and older. They would like to target Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) veterans. Commissioners are encouraged to distribute the survey to their contacts and distribution lists. Survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/QW78C25

There is preliminary planning to host another Military Servicemembers and Veterans Resource Fair in August at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds.

The Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) is in the development stages for a pilot program that would train 20 to 30 clinicians on cognitive treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Five of those clinicians would receive ongoing consultation. CDP will be choosing one military installation and one civilian community to participate in this program. Montgomery County has been selected to be the civilian community.

IV. Veterans Affairs Supporting Housing (VASH) – Joy Flood, Director of Housing Resources, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), and Ken Barnum, Homeless Veterans Outreach Social Worker, Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC)

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, through a cooperative partnership, provides long-term case management, supportive services and permanent housing support. Eligible homeless veterans receive VA provided case management and supportive services to support stability and recovery from physical and mental health, substance use, and functional concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness. The program was designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable homeless veterans. To be eligible for this program, veterans must be VA Health Care eligible, homeless and need and participate in case management services in order to obtain and sustain permanent independent community housing. Veterans that are excluded from the program are homeless veterans that are subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program. Veterans with families and veterans of OIF, OEF and OND are given preference. The VA also offers transitional housing. The DCVAMC has approximately 200 rooms in their transitional housing program. Meals are provided and veterans are enrolled in various support programs, including

employment and substance abuse. Transitional housing is provided for six months to two years depending on which programs that are enrolled in.

The VASH program was originally developed for veterans of OIF, OEF and OND. HOC currently serves 58 veterans in the VASH program in Montgomery County, as well as an additional 17 to 23 veterans that came through the DC voucher program. The majority of veterans using the vouchers are Vietnam era and older. Veterans from OIF, OEF and OND that participate in the VASH Program have been unable to find employment due to multiple deployments.

HOC processes VASH applications within 30 days. The veteran then has 90 days to locate housing. Housing can be through a private landlord or an apartment rental. If a veteran is unable to find housing within the 90 day period, the voucher is given to another veteran. If the veteran has made substantial effort to locate housing, but was unable to locate housing the deadline period can be extended. Otherwise, they can apply again next year if vouchers are available. If a veteran is housed, but relapses or becomes incarcerated and loses their housing, the voucher is then available again for another veteran.

Veterans face many barriers when trying to locate housing. Many have poor credit or a criminal background, which prohibits their application. Rental facilities charge a minimum \$15 application fee for every adult person in the household and some ask for a security deposit of two months rent. Many veterans are not able to pay these fees and Ken will advocate and negotiate on their behalf to lower the costs. Veterans are also responsible for their utility bills. Veterans pay 30% rent based on how much they receive from the VA. Many veterans in the VASH program are zero income and are receiving only food stamps. Several non-profits help veterans after they have located housing. A Wider Circle, a non-profit organization, often provides furniture and other necessities. Manna Food provides emergency supplies. Bethesda Cares provides emergency funding.

Jerry Godwin, Commissioner, inquired as to the maximum monthly amount for the voucher and the total amount of funding that is brought into Montgomery County every year. Joy will send Jerry a spreadsheet with financial data. Monthly rent varies depending on family size, number of bedrooms, location and market.

Joy Flood reported that HOC was notified on Friday that they have been awarded an additional 25 VASH housing vouchers for 2012. **(Note: On February 29, 2012 Ms. Flood corrected this number to 15 additional vouchers.)** Stacy Spann, new Executive Director for HOC, approved the request. Currently, 58 veterans in Montgomery County have been identified as qualifying for a VASH voucher.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report

None.

VI. Planning for 2012 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

The 3rd Annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event will be held Wednesday, March 28th, 2012, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building [Veterans Plaza]. The main topic of the evening will be Agent Orange, Screenings and VA Benefits. Three speakers are currently signed up to present: Michelle Kennedy Prisco, MSN, AMP-C; Alan Oates, Chair, Agent Orange/Dioxin and Other Toxic Exposures Committee, Vietnam Veterans of America; and Jim Vale, Esq., Director, Veterans Benefits Program, VVA. Carl Bedell, Commissioner, will be the moderator. A reception will be held after the presentations. During the reception, the slideshow "[A Means To Heal](#)" will be shown featuring Vietnam War Memorials from throughout the U.S., taken by Michael F. Walsh, lifelong Montgomery County resident and Vietnam Veteran 1967 - 1968.

VII. New Business

None.

VIII. Announcements

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, reported that Montgomery County veterans and family members that require immediate assistance when applying for benefits should contact Phil Munley, Director, Maryland Department of Veterans, at 410-230-4444 or 800-446-4926 or phillip.munley@va.gov. Mr. Munley will provide assistance when Clayton Smith, Veterans Service Officer, is not scheduled to be in Montgomery County. Clayton Smith works at the MontgomeryWorks Wheaton Office the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

VVA Magazine featured an article about the tribute to Greg Hamilton, U.S. Navy, Vietnam Veteran, held at the January Commission meeting. *Greg Hamilton Receives The VVA Achievement Medal*: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/hhs/ads/VA/PDFs/vvagrearticle.pdf.

Lance Hassell, Program Specialist, Memorial Programs Service, VA, reminded Commissioners that veterans are eligible to receive [burial benefits](#) including partial reimbursements of burial and funeral costs, and headstones, markers, and flags are furnished at no charge.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, March 20th, 2012, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison